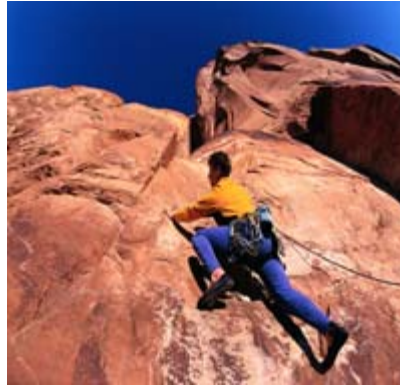


# Who's got trouble?



NOTE: Over my desk I keep two photographs. One is from a party in Lansing in 2002 of a guy who's smiling and large, broad shoulders, and a substantial "beer belly" to match. The other photo is of the same man, wiry and roped to the photographer, much younger then, perched on a slab of granite, high over Boulder, 900' above the trail. **The snapshots have provided daily reminders of what I had become, and what I had been, and in many ways, where I hope to return.**

**Who's got trouble?**

[My Success Story: Progress Continues!](#)

## Success Story: Progress Continues!

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Who's got trouble?

It was a cold afternoon in February 2006, and I was having a chat with my physician. He was politely, but firmly, providing some fatherly advice. And I was having difficulty listening because I was a bit apprehensive, in spite of my belief that I was pretty healthy. After all, I'd been athletic and physically active since I was 14, even though I was taking meds to control blood pressure. I walked the dog every night, and sometimes used the dumbbells parked in front of the TV. Both grandfathers died at age 51; I was 54. They were smokers, and I'd quit decades ago. Still...

Dr Michael Hourani repeated: "Robert, you have pre-diabetes, and fit the profile of the metabolic syndrome, Syndrome X." Eh?

He clarified this, and said my blood sugar was too high, and I needed to "drop 30 to 40 pounds" before 2007 or suffer the full onset of diabetes. Clinical results were telling: my blood pressure was 138/86, A1c was 6.7% (a measure of average blood sugar over a three month period, Dr H said it should be between 5% and 6%). OK, there had been hints that my health needed work. I had seen the orthopedic doc who said I should get a knee replacement; both knees hurt, and so did my hip. It was tough rolling off the couch, and lately I preferred slip-ons because it had become breath-stopping to tie my shoes. I had moderate sleep apnea, and my level of energy to do anything was in short supply. My feet had periodic "pins and needles," signs of pre-diabetic neuropathy. Sadly, two childhood pals, died the previous month. These personal losses, coupled with my health status and decreased abilities, gave me incentive to reconsider my diet, exercise, and weight gain (103 pounds in 20 years: I'm 5'8" and had bulked up to 278 from 175).

Dr H was still talking, now listing complications, counting on his fingers, and number eight was the little piggy that lost his eye sight. *Hey!* My stomach clenched with panic, as my vision had been blurry some mornings, I'd been sure it was because I hadn't had my coffee yet. *I had excuses and explanations for all of this!* I had a beer belly, had become chunky, and I said I liked how people bounced out of my way when waddling through crowds at the football games.

The idea that losing my vision was already happening really scared me. I work part time as an illustrator, and eyesight is vital. I had to do something, *now*, and couldn't ignore what he said about my symptoms. I look back now and see that this visit was the turning point. He finished with a final piece of advice, "You need to burn off the sugar, every day."

I resolved to save my own life. In the next few weeks, I consulted with a dietician, and eliminated white bread, pasta, beer, white rice, and potatoes. No more fried foods and pastries. I cut back on all sweets, and integrated principles from the South Beach Diet, focusing on good

carbs, protein, and changing the exercise. I tracked my plan, weight changes, and progress every day, in a journal so I could tailor strategies and make improvements.

I started walking more, and have always enjoyed athletics. I lettered on the high school track team, and ran distance for decades after that. I'd done the Lansing to Mackinac Bridge bicycle ride over Labor Day (DALMAC) in 2004 and 2005, and climbed mountains in California, Colorado, and Washington. I studied martial arts and lifted weights. As years went by, it'd become more appealing to tear open a package of Oreos than a new box of Nikes!

I participated in Six Weeks to Wellness at work, which enabled me to anchor new personal health changes. I increased weight lifting sessions from twice to three times per week, and extended daily walks from 20 to 45 minutes. I lost 30 lbs in 2006, but then gained back 4.

In 2007, I lengthened the time spent walking the dog to 60-75 minutes, 6 days a week. As a result, Mollie, my fox terrier, went from a waddle-some 26 lbs down to 18 (which made the veterinarian happy, too) and I dropped another 10 lbs.

Dietary changes are still the most difficult. I manage to avoid sweets most days, and eat salads daily. I've added meditation to the program. Lab results continue to improve, with cholesterol at 184 and hemoglobin A1c at 5.2%. Blood pressure is now at 110/66.

The results continue to accrue. It's April 30, 2008, and I've lost 46 lbs, I'm wearing clothes that haven't fit in years, and I can climb 9 flights of stairs to the office in less than 4 minutes. Now, if my knees continue to heal without surgery, I'll do DALMAC again.